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ABSTRACT

Two surveys were conducted: (1) one of 78 ERIC document users at Ohio State University to gather data on how they find and use the ERIC documents and their attitudes toward the library's lending policy; and (2) one of 218 academic libraries with ERIC microfiche collections to obtain information on their patrons' access to and use of ERIC documents. The 179 responses received from libraries indicated that, although most institutions do not lend ERIC microfiche and viewers, the majority of those that do experienced no serious problems with the practice. Of the 43 library users who completed the questionnaire, nearly half reported that they attempted to find paper copies of the ERIC microfiche documents before using the microfiche, and 51% of them also charged out a viewer, while 32% planned to use a viewer elsewhere, four intended to copy their documents on a reader-printer elsewhere, and three owned their own viewers. Searching ERIC on CD-ROM was the most cited source of references, followed by the library system's online catalog. Nearly all of the respondents felt that the process for gathering references and locating ERIC microfiche was simple and understandable, and two-thirds of them reported that the library policy was suitable for their purposes. Additional information on the library survey provided in this report includes loan periods and annual circulation rates for both microfiche and viewers; number of microfiche that can be charged out; user access to ERIC files; amounts of in-house equipment; and problems encountered. Copies of the two questionnaires are appended. (BBM)

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LIBRARY CIRCULATION OF ERIC MICROFICHE DOCUMENTS AND PORTABLE VIEWERS

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Introduction

Hundreds of college and university libraries in the United States make available to their users the products of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), an indexing, researching, and publishing agency sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. Among the ERIC resources found in these academic libraries is an extensive collection of educational documents on microfiche. These documents make up a rich and varied pool of literature, covering all topics in education and addressing many subjects in related fields. Various types of documents appear in the microfiche collection, including conference papers, statistical reports, curriculum materials, government studies, literature reviews, and research reports. The Educational Resources Information Center has been issuing microfiche documents, indexes, and related materials since 1966. Over these twenty-two years the network of ERIC clearinghouses and the libraries that collect ERIC products have become a valuable source of materials for educators and researchers. The steadily growing ERIC database now contains over 576,000 citations to the microfiche reports and to journal articles.[1]

The author of this paper assumed that most libraries

holding ERIC documents do not permit the reports to be charged out for use outside the building. The possibility of losing the items, the initial cost of providing portable viewing equipment, and the additional work involved in the circulation of microfiche and viewers would limit the occurrence of this practice. Microform materials of any kind traditionally have been used within the library only.

The author also assumed, based on his own library's experience, that to circulate ERIC microfiche documents and viewers on which to read them is a practical service for the library to provide, and an advantageous one for the library's users. Loss rates of the ERIC documents appeared to be low, and patrons seemed to appreciate having an alternative method of using the microfiche. By increasing users' access to the microfiche file in this way, a library may be able to circumvent Mooers' Law: "An information retrieval system will tend not to be used whenever it is more painful and troublesome for a customer to have information than for him not to have it."[2]

In order to test these assumptions, the author surveyed other academic libraries across the country on their patrons' access to and use of ERIC documents; and he surveyed his own library's users on their habits and attitudes regarding the ERIC documents they were charging out.

The large response to the library survey confirmed the assumption that most institutions do not lend ERIC fiche and viewers. However, the majority of institutions that do lend fiche and viewers reported no serious problems with the practice.

Among the library users surveyed, nearly half attempted to find duplicates of the ERIC microfiche documents in printed paper form. This emphasizes the user's desire for hard copy text. These findings, and others, are discussed in more detail below.

Review of the Literature

Although there appear to be no published studies dealing with the lending of ERIC microfiche documents in particular, there is a large body of literature on users' acceptance of microforms and microform viewing equipment in general. S. J. Teague, Stephen R. Salmon, and Susan K. Nutter summarize various user acceptance studies that consider factors such as equipment failure, physical discomfort, lack of standardization, and inadequate bibliographic control.[3] For her part, Nutter boils the issue down to three key variables that affect patron acceptance of microforms: (1) the value of the information to the user, (2) the ease of bibliographic access to the material, and (3) the physical and psychological environment of the microform area.[4] (Mooers' Law again.)

There have also been a number of experiments with the loan of viewers and of class materials on microform.[5] In support of the lending of viewers, Grausnick and Kottenstette claim that "the convenience of having the viewer at home overcomes some of the difficulties inherent in its use; without this convenience, system defects are too troublesome when the familiar hardcopy is

readily available."[6] Due in part to the acquisition of circulating portable viewers, Susan K. Nutter witnessed a significant rise in the use of the microform room at the Barker Engineering Library. She also observed that patrons rarely use microform materials that are intended for limited use, such as out-of-print works on microform or items in microform storage; but that patrons routinely use microforms when the material itself is current or relevant.[7] Although a complete collection of ERIC microfiche documents will not be entirely current, the documents are germane to educational research, and, in many libraries, the ERIC collection is a routinely used body of material. Such is the case in the author's library, where patrons were surveyed regarding the use of ERIC materials.

Method: Patron Survey

The survey of local library users was an attempt to learn how patrons find and use the ERIC documents and what they think of the library's lending policy. The Education/Psychology Library at Ohio State University holds a complete file of ERIC microfiche reports, comprehensive runs of Resources in Education (the index to the microfiche documents) and of Current Index to Journals in Education, and several copies of the Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors. The librarians conduct fee-based online searches of the ERIC database for patrons; and they recently installed a CD-ROM work station that enables users to conduct

their own searches on a portion of the database free of charge. The library system's online catalog enables users to look up and check the availability of the ERIC microfiche documents. Users are free to pull the fiche from the cabinets by themselves, and they may borrow the documents and a portable viewer on a one-week, renewable loan. Alternatively, users may read the microfiche on stationary viewers in the library, or they may print full-size paper copies of the reports on the library's reader-printers at ten cents per page. In various ways, from giving workshops to providing instructional brochures, the library staff teaches patrons to use the ERIC tools.

The survey of local library patrons followed a pretest that evaluated the questionnaire's format and wording. In particular, the arrangement of choices in the somewhat opinionative questions 4 and 5 needed to be tested (see the patron questionnaire in Appendix A). The pretest showed that the sequence of choices was reliable, and it also indicated that more precise wording was needed in question 9. The final questionnaire was ready for use during the spring quarter of 1988 (28 March through 10 June). Circulation desk workers were briefed on the procedures: primarily, that they should give a questionnaire to any user charging out ERIC microfiche documents, that these patrons could return the questionnaire later if they did not wish to fill it out at the moment, and that users should complete the survey only once.

Results of the Patron Survey

Of 80 questionnaires made available for distribution to users charging out ERIC microfiche documents, 2 were left at the end of the survey period. Forty-four of the 78 distributed questionnaires returned, making a 56% return rate. Because one respondent failed to answer question 10, which was the beginning variable in the tally of each return, that form was rejected, leaving 43 usable returns.

Question 10 asked respondents to indicate their academic status and field of study. Graduate students made up the largest group by status, amounting to 86% of all usable responses. Respondents in various areas of education made up the largest group by field of study, at 90% of all usable responses. The respondents formed a fairly homogeneous group of graduate education students, if an admittedly small population. In relation to the larger university setting, the thirty-one graduate respondents who indicated educational fields represented 1.15% of the 2,694 graduate students enrolled in the College of Education for spring quarter 1988. One explanation for the small survey size is that to borrow ERIC microfiche and viewers is an exceptional activity: users are more likely to pay for full-size prints of ERIC documents, or simply to read the reports on stationary viewers inside the library, or a combination of the two.

Which viewer: Fifty-one percent of respondents indicated that they would read their just-charged ERIC documents on a

portable viewer also charged out from the Education/Psychology Library. The next largest group, 32%, planned to use a viewer provided elsewhere. Four respondents (10%) planned to copy their documents on a reader-printer provided elsewhere. Three graduate students indicated that they owned their own viewers.

Sources of references: Most respondents (28%), indicated that they found the references to their ERIC documents through a CD-ROM search. (This reflects the growing popularity of the library's ERIC CD-ROM system. In the survey pretest the CD-ROM service, then newly installed, ranked third as a source of reference.) The next-most-cited source (22%) was the library system's online catalog. This means that these respondents either found their ERIC references initially in the catalog, or used the catalog to verify that the reports were in the microfiche file after finding the references in other sources, or, most likely, a blend of the two. Printed sources other than Resources in Education were marked by 19% of respondents, followed by Resources in Education itself (17%). Online database searches were given as a source by 11% of respondents. Other choices received less than a 10% response. Because this was a check-all-that-apply question, the different sources may have been used together in unknown combinations; thus the percentages indicate relative rates of use, but do not imply the use of some sources exclusive of others.

Users' familiarity with the ERIC system: The results on this item are too mixed to be meaningful. The same number of respondents (seven, or 16%) indicated that they had no experience

with ERIC, two years' experience, and more than four years' experience. The responses are slightly heavier on the less-experience end of the scale than on the more-experience end, but only by 3%.

The most helpful resource in learning to use the ERIC materials: One-third of the respondents (33%) reported that a librarian or other library worker had been most helpful. "Myself, on my own" was marked by 23% of respondents. Eight respondents (21%) cited the introductory pages in Resources in Education and in the Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors as being most useful. This may seem surprising to reference librarians, whose experience is that patrons, under pressure to advance on their research, generally do not bother to read the introductory pages of reference tools. Library handouts, brochures, or posters were cited by 10% of respondents. Other choices received a response of less than 10%.

Nearly all the respondents (95%) felt that it was a simple, understandable process to gather references and to locate the ERIC microfiche reports; leaving 5% who thought it was a complicated, confusing process.

Suitability of the library's loan policy: Two-thirds of the respondents (67%) reported that the library's policy was suitable for their purposes, and one-third (33%) indicated that it was not. Among the respondents' suggestions for improving the policy were nine pleas for longer loan periods, two requests to have more viewers available for loan, and two complaints about the library's practice of holding ID cards as collateral for

microfiche viewers.

Availability of viewers: Fifty-one percent of respondents reported that the library had never run out of viewers when they needed to take one; 22% of respondents noted that it had; and 27% had no experience in charging out a viewer.

Success in retrieving the ERIC documents: A majority of respondents (79%) indicated that they found all the reports they were looking for. This is the same percentage of pretest respondents who found all the documents they were looking for. Those with one report they could not find numbered eight, or 19%. Only one individual (2% of all respondents) failed to find two or more ERIC microfiche documents.

Checking for paper copies: Slightly under half the respondents (46%) reported that they checked the library system's online catalog for printed, paper copies of the microfiche documents, and slightly over half (54%) indicated that they did not. Those who did not check for paper copies were asked to mark all applicable reasons why not. Out of a total of thirty-two usable replies, 47% of respondents did not know that paper duplicates might exist, and 28% did not know they could use the online catalog to find paper copies. Thirteen percent (four individuals) stated that they prefer to use microfiche over paper copies. They may actually prefer microfiche, or they may have marked this survey choice only as a joke. Responses to other choices amounted to less than 10%.

Method: Library Survey

A different survey was distributed to ERIC libraries one month previous to the start of the patron survey. The library survey had been preceded by a pretest whose subjects were college or university education libraries with at least a ten-year run of ERIC microfiche documents--a total of twenty-seven institutions, as identified in the Directory of ERIC Information Service Providers (1986). The pretest was useful for indicating a problem in the wording of survey question 4, which asked for amounts of in-house microfiche equipment (see the library questionnaire in Appendix B). The final questionnaire and cover letter were prepared for 218 institutions, which were selected as follows: In the Directory of ERIC Information Service Providers, 456 institutions met the following criteria: they were academic libraries (college or university); they indicated holdings of at least ten years' worth of ERIC microfiche; and, on multi-library campuses, they served as the major source of ERIC materials. In order to keep the survey size manageable, half of the 456 valid institutions were randomly selected. From the resulting 228 institutions were subtracted ten pretest libraries that reappeared in the random sample, leaving a final survey population of 218, or 48% of all applicable ERIC libraries.

The cover letter asked respondents to return the survey by 30 April 1988. This allowed them roughly two months to respond and took into consideration the fact that many academic institutions would be on spring break during this time. As an

incentive to complete the questionnaire, the cover letter offered respondents a copy of the survey results. At the top of the questionnaire an introductory note asked respondents to answer for their particular libraries and not for other units forming a library system; and it asked them to answer for their own users, exclusive of interlibrary loan borrowers.

Results of the Library Survey

Of the 218 questionnaires distributed to the survey institutions, 179 returned, making a return rate of 82%. One explanation for this unusually high rate of return may be that the questionnaire was made as brief and straightforward as possible. Contributing factors may have been that each institution's questionnaire was addressed directly to the "ERIC Documents Librarian," that respondents were offered a copy of the survey results, and that each survey included a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the respondent's reply. All of the returned surveys were usable in some respect, so that none had to be rejected out of hand.

Lending ERIC microfiche documents for use outside the library: Most respondents (71%) reported that they do not lend ERIC documents, leaving 29% (fifty-two libraries) who do.

Characteristics of the microfiche lenders:

(1) Loan periods for ERIC documents: Of the fifty usable responses, most institutions reported a one- to two-week loan period (table 1). The "variable" respondents indicated a range of time (e.g., 7-13 days), differing loan periods according to status (e.g., 21 days to undergraduates; 60 days to graduate students), or differing loan periods according to time of year (e.g., 1 week regular semester; 3 days summer).

Table 1

Loan Periods for ERIC Documents

Loan Period	Number of Institutions
3 days	3
1 week	16
10 days	1
2 weeks	9
3 weeks	5
4 weeks	2
1 month	2
semester	2
varies	10
Total	50

(2) Renewals of ERIC documents: Seventy-nine percent of lenders allow renewals, against 21% who do not.

(3) Limits on the number of ERIC documents that a user may charge out: Thirty-four of the lenders (65%) apply no limit. The limits applied by the others vary from four titles to ten or more titles.

(4) Annual circulation rate of ERIC documents: Responses range from a high of 7,000 to a low of 0. Some of the figures are unreliable, judging from the comments that respondents added to their numerical replies. For example, the figure of 7,000 and another of 6,000 seem to include interlibrary loan figures. Other responses, of 2,976 and 350, include rates of in-house use. Therefore the average circulation rate of 1,006 cannot be reliable. More representative are the median circulation rate of 225, and the mode, 200.

(5) Recurrent or notable problems: More than three-quarters of the lenders (76%) reported no major problems with the circulation of ERIC documents. Respondents from seven institutions cited problems with loss or late return of the microfiche.

Lending microfiche viewers: Most respondents (119, or 68%) do not lend viewers, leaving 32% (fifty-seven libraries) who do.

Characteristics of the viewer lenders:

(1) Number of viewers available: The responses range from a

low of 1 to a high of 50. The institutions with the three largest numbers of viewers have 50, 25, and 22, respectively. The average number of viewers available for loan is 6, the median is 8, and the mode is 3.

(2) Deposit or collateral: A surprising 75% of lenders indicated that no deposit is taken (whereas one might expect that most lenders would require some sort of deposit for equipment on loan). Nine respondents (16%) reported that an ID card was required, but they seem to mean that the viewers are charged out upon presentation of an ID card, not that the card is left as a deposit. Only two lenders require a monetary deposit from borrowers of viewing equipment.

(3) Loan periods for microfiche viewers: Most lenders indicated a one- to two-week loan policy (table 2). Responses counted as variable were those indicating a range of time (e.g., 7-13 days) or a flexible length of time (e.g., overnight or per week).

(4) Renewals of microfiche viewers: Ninety-one percent of lenders indicated that they do permit renewals of viewer loans.

(5) Annual circulation rate of microfiche viewers: Responses range from 0 to 762. The top four figures are 762, 500, 444, and 400. The tally then drops to the figure 130-150, and continues down from that point. The average rate of circulation is 80 viewers per year. The more representative median is 27.5, and the mode turns out to be 0 because most respondents, although only three, gave that response.

Table 2

Loan Periods for Microfiche Viewers

Loan period	Number of institutions
2 days	1
3 days	2
1 week	21
2 weeks	9
3 weeks	4
4 weeks	1
1 month	3
varies	16
Total	57

(6) Recurrent or notable problems: More than half the respondents (58%) reported no serious problems with the lending of microfiche viewers. Eleven respondents complained about slow returns or lost equipment, and four respondents cited the need for more viewers.

Patron access to the microfiche files: The majority of respondents (83%) reported that users themselves may retrieve the documents from the library's files, leaving thirty institutions (17%) in which only library employees may pull the documents.

Microfiche equipment available within the library: Respondents were asked to provide figures for amounts of in-house equipment (table 3).

Methods of user instruction: Most respondents (32%) teach patrons to use ERIC materials through face-to-face interaction. This is followed closely by library instruction classes or tours, exclusive of online or CD-ROM workshops, at 30%. Handouts, brochures, or posters are employed by 20% of respondents, and online or CD-ROM workshops by 12%. Other survey choices were cited by less than 10% of the population. Because this was a check-all-that-apply question, responses indicate relative, but not exclusive, rates of use.

Table 3

Amounts of In-house Equipment

	Stationary Viewers	Reader-printers	Fiche Duplicators
Average	8	3	.22
Median	11	5	1
Mode	4	2	0
High	40	12	2

Citation of ERIC microfiche documents in the library catalog: Respondents overwhelmingly indicated (by 93%) that users cannot look up ERIC documents in the catalog, leaving twelve

libraries in which users can.

Discussion

The results of these two surveys support the assumptions that it is practical for libraries to lend ERIC microfiche documents and portable viewers, and that a minority of libraries provide that sort of service.

The library survey clearly shows that most academic ERIC libraries do not lend microfiche documents and portable viewers. However, of those which do circulate ERIC documents, 76% report no major problems. A smaller percentage of those which lend viewers, but still over half of them (58%), report no major problems. This percentage is smaller because a library will always have far fewer portable viewers than microfiche, because viewing equipment may malfunction or break, and because the loss of viewers is more costly than the loss of ERIC microfiche. (Today a portable viewer costs roughly $200 to $250, but an ERIC microfiche report, depending on its length, costs about $1.) In any case, the libraries which lend ERIC fiche and viewers generally have met with success.

Regardless of the explanations for the large response to the library survey (direct address, short questionnaire, offer of survey results, and stamped return envelope), 82% is still an exceptionally high rate of return. This degree of cooperation may indicate that librarians are quite interested in the issues

surrounding the circulation of microforms and viewers, and may suggest that additional studies and experiments will be welcome.

Among the results of the patron survey is a noteworthy finding: The number of users who indicated that they planned to read their just-charged microfiche reports on a viewer taken out from the library (twenty-one, or 51% of usable responses) is the same number and percentage of patrons who claimed that the library had never run out of viewers when they wanted to borrow one. Moreover, 67% of the patron respondents reported that the library's fiche and viewer loan policy was suitable for their purposes.

The author's experience contradicts the argument that loss rates will soar if patrons are allowed to borrow ERIC microfiche documents. A healthy 79% of user survey respondents--in both the pretest and the final survey--found all the ERIC reports they were looking for. In order to check this high rate of success, a physical search was conducted for 100 randomly sampled ERIC documents with accession numbers ranging from ED174744 (the beginning number in the January 1980 issue of Resources in Education) to ED281975 (the ending number in the September 1987 Resources in Education). The documents in this number range had been processed into the library's microfiche file and were accessible through Resources in Education, CD-ROM and online searches, and the library system's online catalog. These were the results of the physical search:

One report was definitely missing. It was not in the file in or near its place, not in the return or sorting areas, and not

left in any of the tabletop viewers; yet it was available according to the online catalog. There was an empty fiche jacket near that report's place in the file--evidence that something had been there.

One report was determined to be unavailable from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Unlike most ERIC documents, some copyrighted ERIC items are never issued in microfiche to subscribing libraries.

In the case of one lengthy report that covered three pieces of microfiche, fiche number three was misfiled.

All the other reports were in their places in the file. The result was a 99% success rate, or a 98% success rate, depending on how one counts the item "not available from EDRS," and disregarding the misfiled fiche number three.

One may begin to assume that the ERIC documents an individual needs will be in the file, even though they circulate and even though some never return. In a collection of more than one-quarter of a million microfiche documents, a patron will usually locate all the items he or she needs, particularly when the loan period for the documents is brief. A study by T. Saracevic, W. M. Shaw, Jr., and P. B. Kantor suggests that short loan periods result in greater availability of materials for all users.[8]

Moreover, the loss rate of ERIC documents in the author's library is not great, and neither is the replacement cost. Between January 1987 and January 1988 the library ordered 187 replacements for reports that had been identified as missing.

EDRS charges $.82 for microfiche copies of documents ranging in length from one to five fiche (1-480 actual pages). Documents longer than five fiche cost $.82 plus $.16 for each additional fiche (1-96 pages). Because most of the missing documents would fall into the one-to-five-fiche category, the cost to replace 187 reports would be about $153.

The surveys also provided several unexpected findings. For example, the library survey demonstrated that lending institutions are more generous with portable viewers than they are with ERIC microfiche documents. Of the institutions that lend viewers, 28% do not lend ERIC documents. Conversely, 9% of the institutions that do not lend viewers do lend ERIC documents. Overall, 3% more survey institutions lend microfiche viewers than lend ERIC documents--despite the initial equipment cost, the replacement cost for lost viewers, and the problems of breakage and malfunction.

A notable finding is the number of references to the lending of microfilm viewers. Most models of portable viewers are made to accommodate microfiche because fiche is less bulky and easier to handle than film. Yet one of the surveyed libraries has fifteen film viewers as well as ten fiche viewers available for loan. Two respondents also mentioned film viewers in the survey section on viewer circulation rate, and one of them indicated that there is a greater demand for film viewers than for fiche viewers (presumably by those patrons who wish to read periodical articles that are on microfilm.)

There is an interesting similarity in both surveys'

responses concerning instruction in the use of ERIC materials. In the patron survey, most respondents credited a librarian or other library worker with providing the most useful instruction. In the library survey, most respondents checked "one-on-one instruction during the reference process" as a way in which they teach patrons to use ERIC resources. If it was ever in doubt, this underscores the value of the library's public services personnel.

Portions of the library survey data were compared in order to check for trends in patrons' accessibility to ERIC documents. In one case, comparisons were made to determine if libraries that do not lend ERIC documents make up for this by providing exceptional in-house viewing and copying services. The non-lenders' amounts of in-house microfiche equipment were matched with the lenders' amounts (table 4). The lenders appear to have more in-house viewers, but the high in the non-lender group is 40, against a high of 27 in the lender group. The non-lenders are slightly ahead in numbers of reader-printers and fiche-to-fiche copiers, but neither group is very far off the figures for <u>all</u> respondents' answers to Question 4 (see table 3). This forces the conclusion that a library which does not lend ERIC microfiche documents does not necessarily provide outstanding in-house viewing and copying services for users of ERIC documents. That is, in libraries that restrict ERIC documents to in-house use (which is generally the case), patrons may find too few in-house viewers and reader-printers.

Table 4

In-house Equipment, ERIC Document Non-lenders and Lenders

	Stationary Viewers	Reader-printers	Fiche Duplicators
Non-lenders			
Average	7.4	2.2	.23
Median	9	5	1
Mode	4	2	0
High	40	9[a]	2
Lenders			
Average	10	2.4	.19
Median	10	3.5	.5
Mode	6	2	0
High	27	7	1

[a]Differs from the high in table 3 because of unusable replies to survey question 1.

In a similar fashion, a study was made of the responses of the twelve survey libraries in which users can look up ERIC microfiche documents in the library catalog. Assuming that these institutions may be noticeably liberal regarding ERIC reports in other respects, their responses to the questions concerning access, fiche loans, and viewer loans were isolated. The twelve institutions score higher on patron access than all institutions

giving the same response to question 3: eleven of them (92%) allow patrons to pull their own microfiche. However, they are symmetrically divided on loans: five lend ERIC fiche and seven do not; five lend fiche viewers (not the same five) and seven do not. As above, one cannot assume that generous lending policies will be in effect simply because a library includes references to ERIC microfiche reports in its catalog.

Conclusion

It is important to remember that the lending of ERIC microfiche documents and portable viewers is an exceptional activity. Although it is a feasible service for libraries to provide, it is by no means the patron's foremost manner of using ERIC documents. In most libraries, users must either read the microfiche documents in the library or make, and pay for, paper copies of the documents on a reader-printer. Even in the author's library, one which lends ERIC microfiche and viewers, more users prefer to make full-size paper copies of the documents than to read the microfiche at home. Unfortunately, the online catalog and circulation system does not enable one to know the circulation rate of ERIC microfiche documents from this particular library. It is known, however, that during the eleven weeks of the user survey the library circulated about 64 portable viewers (the figure is approximate because monthly circulation periods and academic quarter dates do not correspond

exactly). This contrasts with roughly 912 uses of the library's reader-printers during the same period. (ERIC microfiche accounts for most, but not all, reader-printer activity. Some copying is of periodicals on microfiche, for example.)

In addition, 46% of respondents to the patron survey reported that they checked the library system's online catalog for printed copies of their ERIC reports. This is difficult to believe, because in the author's library there is no consistent attempt to teach patrons to do this; but 53% of the pretest respondents likewise indicated that they checked to see if paper copies were available, and one commented, "I wish they had been." To measure the possibility of finding duplicate copies in paper, title searches were run in the online catalog for the same 100 randomly sampled documents referred to above. Nine reports were found to be available in printed form as well as in microfiche, hence a 9% success rate. This must be considered in perspective, however. Nine out of 100 is not necessarily equivalent to 9% of the entire ERIC microfiche collection. Also, searching the catalog by title is the easiest way to find the same item in paper, but it is not the only way. For example, a printed version may be buried in conference proceedings in the bookstacks, or may be part of a printed report series. The patron intent on finding paper equivalents of ERIC documents must find additional bibliographic information about the items through reference sources such as Resources in Education. In any case, paper copies are available with enough frequency, and users want printed materials badly enough, that roughly half of the user

survey respondents felt compelled to look for them. Contrary to the claims in some of the literature on microform use, and consistent with the author's observations, most patrons would rather have a document in paper, whether borrowed from the stacks or made (at cost) on a reader-printer, than in microform.

Libraries that circulate ERIC documents and portable viewers provide their patrons with a generous alternative and increase their users' access to the microfiche collection. The challenge for these institutions is to maintain an adequate number of viewers for loan and to ensure that the viewers work properly. If the library cannot meet this challenge, it should endeavor to provide a sufficient number of in-house viewers and reader-printers, and it should charge patrons as little as possible for full-size prints of ERIC microfiche documents.

Notes

1. Ted Brandhorst and Joanna Eustace, eds., Directory of ERIC Information Service Providers (Washington, D.C.: Educational Resources Information Center, 1986), 90.

2. Calvin N. Mooers, "Mooers' Law; or, Why Some Retrieval Systems Are Used and Others Are Not," American Documentation 11 (July 1960): 204.

3. S. J. Teague, Microform Librarianship, 2d ed. (London: Butterworths, 1979), 8-11; Stephen R. Salmon, "User Resistance to Microforms in the Research Library," Microform Review 3 (July 1974): 194-99; and Susan K. Nutter, "Microforms and the User: Key Variables of User Acceptance in a Library Environment," Drexel Library Quarterly 11 (October 1975): 17-31.

4. Nutter, "Microforms and the User," 18.

5. See, for example, Robert Grausnick and James P. Kottenstette, An Investigation of the Environment for Educational Microform Utilization: Phase I, Student Use of Classroom Microform in Support of a Survey Course, Final Phase Report, ERIC microfiche no. ED050602 (Denver: University of Denver, 1971); Susan K.

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6. Grausnick and Kottenstette, Investigation of the Environment, 29.

7. Nutter, "User Preference Studies," 36-37, 39.

8. T. Saracevic, W. M. Shaw, Jr., and P. B. Kantor, "Causes and Dynamics of User Frustration in an Academic Library," College & Research Libraries 38 (January 1977): 7-18.

Appendix A

Patron Questionnaire

1. Which viewer will you use to read the ERIC microfiche you have just charged out? (Check one.)

__ a portable viewer also charged out from this library

__ a viewer provided elsewhere (departmental office, another library, etc.)

__ a viewer that I own personally

__ a reader-printer provided elsewhere, so I can make copies from the report(s) somewhere else...

Where? _____

__ other: _____

2. Where did you get the references to the ERIC microfiche reports you are taking out now? (Check all that apply.)

__ the ERIC index volumes (RIE)

__ other printed sources (reference lists, bibliographies, indexes, articles, books, etc.)

__ an online database search (run for me by a librarian)

__ a CD-ROM (compact disk) search (that I ran by myself or with assistance)

__ LCS (the libraries' computerized catalog)

__ from a friend, colleague, professor, relative, etc.

__ other: _____

3. Approximately how much experience have you had in finding and using the ERIC microfiche reports? (Check one.)

__ none before this

__ 1 academic quarter

__ 2 academic quarters

__ 1 year

__ 2 years

__ 3 years

__ 4 years

__ more than 4 years

4. When you were first learning to gather ERIC references, which resource gave you the most useful instruction? (Check one.)

__ library handout, brochure, or poster

__ librarian or other library worker

__ introductory pages in the ERIC indexes (RIE, or the Thesaurus)

__ computer aids, such as "help" screens or manuals

__ myself, on my own

__ online or CD-ROM workshop

__ other library instruction class or tour

__ other: _____

5. Do you think it is a simple, understandable process to gather references and to locate the ERIC microfiche reports; or do you think it is a complicated, confusing process?

__ a simple, understandable process

__ a complicated, confusing process

Additional comments: _____

6. This library lends ERIC microfiche reports and portable viewers for one week (with renewals possible). Is this policy suitable for your purposes?

__ yes __ no

If "no," what changes in the loan policy would you recommend?

_____

_____

7. Has this library ever run out of portable viewers when you wanted to take one out?

__ yes

__ no

__ no experience--I have never before charged out a viewer from this library.

8. Considering the ERIC microfiche you are taking out now, were you able to obtain all the microfiche reports you were looking for? (Check one.)

__ I found them all.

__ There was one I could not find.

__ There were two or more I could not find.

9. When you were gathering the ERIC microfiche reports you are taking out now, did you check LCS (the libraries' computerized catalog) to see if any copies **of the same reports** were available in paper form in the book stacks?

__ yes __ no

If "no," please elaborate by checking all that apply:

__ I did not know that duplicate copies might exist in printed paper form.

__ I did not know it was possible to find paper copies using LCS.

__ It is too much trouble to check LCS for paper copies.

__ The percentage of ERIC reports available in paper is too low.

__ The paper copies are often charged out by other users.

__ I prefer using microfiche over paper copies.

10. Please describe yourself by checking and answering all that apply:

__ OSU undergraduate student.
__ OSU graduate student.
} Primary field of study: _____

__ OSU faculty or A/P.
__ OSU staff member.
} College or department: _____

__ General public. Primary field of study: _____

Appendix B

Library Questionnaire

1. Does your library lend ERIC microfiche documents for use outside the library (not counting interlibrary loans)?

__ no (Skip to question 2.)

__ yes (Please answer the following:)

a. What is/are the loan period(s) for ERIC microfiche documents?

_____

b. Are renewals permitted? __ yes __ no

c. What is the limit on the number of ERIC microfiche documents a user may charge out? _____

d. If you can, please state your library's circulation rate of ERIC microfiche documents, in terms of total annual charges:

_____ per year

e. What recurrent or notable problem(s) has your library had with the circulation of ERIC microfiche documents? _____

_____

2. Does your library lend microfiche viewers for use outside the library?

__ no (Skip to question 3.)

__ yes (Please answer the following:)

a. How many viewers does your library have for users to charge out? _____

b. What sort of deposit or collateral does your library require of borrowers of microfiche viewers? _____

c. What is/are the loan period(s) for microfiche viewers?

_____

d. Are renewals permitted? __ yes __ no

e. If you can, please state your library's circulation rate of microfiche viewers, in terms of total annual charges:

_____ per year

f. What recurrent or notable problem(s) has your library had with the circulation of microfiche viewers? _____

_____

3. Please check the statement that best describes your library's access policy:

__ Users themselves may retrieve the ERIC documents from the microfiche file.

__ Only library employees may retrieve the ERIC documents from the microfiche file.

4. Please provide figures to show how many of the following pieces of equipment are available for users of ERIC documents in your library:

   a. Stationary, non-circulating microfiche viewers (not counting reader-printers): _____

   b. Microfiche reader-printers: _____

   c. Fiche-to-fiche duplicators: _____

5. In your library, how do you and your colleagues teach users to gather ERIC references and microfiche documents? (Check all that apply.)

   __ online or CD-ROM workshops

   __ other library instruction classes or tours

   __ one-on-one instruction during the reference process

   __ handouts, brochures, or posters

   __ computer aids, such as "help" screens or manuals

   __ other: _____

6. Considering your library's catalog (whether card, COM, or online), are users able to look up the ERIC microfiche documents in the catalog itself?

   __ yes __ no